

In the claims:

Claims 1-3. (Canceled)

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) A backing plate for a drum brake assembly comprising an abutment plate comprising a first part configured to be attached to an axle housing of a vehicle and a second part extending from said first part and configured to ~~resist~~receive braking forces applied thereto by brake shoes during braking and transmit said braking forces to said first part, and a shielding plate extending radially beyond said abutment plate and configured to shield brake components, wherein ~~the area occupied by said abutment plate is less than that occupied by said shielding plate~~, said shielding plate is configured to support said brake shoes and a hydraulic cylinder for operating said ~~drum~~brake shoes, said abutment and shielding plates are made of different materials, and said shielding plate is made of damped steel that dampens noise and vibrations.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel.

Claims 8-14 (Cancelled)

Claim 15. (Currently Amended) A drum brake comprising an abutment plate comprising a sheet of steel having a first part configured to attach to an axle housing and a second part configured to ~~resist~~receive braking forces applied by brake shoes and transmit said braking forces to said first part, and a shielding plate made of vibration dampening material attached to said abutment plate and configured to support said brake shoes, wherein said abutment plate and said shielding plate are made of different materials.

Claim 16 (Original) A drum brake according to claim 15 wherein said shielding plate is configured to receive a hydraulic cylinder.

Claim 17 (Previously presented) A drum brake according to claim 15 wherein said sound dampening material comprises damped steel comprising two sheets of steel.

Claim 18. (Previously presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel having a thickness of 3mm to 6mm.

Claim 19. (Previously presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel has a thickness of 0.8mm to 1.2mm.

Claim 20 (New) A drum brake assembly comprising a shielding plate made of vibration dampening material that dampens noise and vibrations, said shielding plate being configured to support and shield brake components including drum brake shoes and a hydraulic cylinder for operating said drum brake shoes, an anchor block for engaging ends of said brake shoes, and an abutment plate having a first part configured to be attached to an axle housing of a vehicle and a second part extending from said first part and engaging said anchor block to receive braking forces applied thereto by said brake shoes during braking and to transmit said braking forces to said first part, said abutment and shielding plates being made of different materials.

Claim 21. (New) A drum brake assembly according to claim 1 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 22. (New) A drum brake assembly according to claim 1 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel.

Claim 23. (New) A drum brake assembly according to claim 1 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel having a thickness of 3mm to 6mm.

Claim 24. (New) A drum brake assembly according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel has a thickness of 0.8mm to 1.2mm.